



Testimony of
**Shellye Davis, Executive Vice President
Connecticut AFL-CIO**

Government Administration and Elections Committee
March 11, 2022

SB 350 An Act Establishing Juneteenth Independence Day as a Legal Holiday

Good afternoon Senator Flexer, Representative Fox and members of Governmental Administration and Elections Committee. My name is Shellye Davis, and I am proud to serve as the Executive Vice President of the Connecticut AFL-CIO, a federation of hundreds of local unions representing more than 200,000 members in the private sector, public sector, and building trades. Our members live and work in every city and town in our state and reflect the diversity that makes Connecticut great. Thank you for the opportunity provide testimony in support of SB 350 An Act Establishing Juneteenth as a Legal Holiday.

Juneteenth commemorates the anniversary of June 19, 1865, when news finally reached enslaved people in Galveston, Texas that President Abraham Lincoln had issued the Emancipation Proclamation on January 1, 1863. It was recognized as a federal holiday on June 17, 2021, when President Joe Biden signed the Juneteenth National Independence Day Act into law. It is now just and appropriate that the State of Connecticut formally recognize and observe Juneteenth Independence Day as a state legal holiday.

The labor movement has a long tradition of fighting for civil rights, always linking workers' rights to civil rights, economic rights and human rights. We regularly work, often in coalition, to advance policies that contribute to dismantling 400-year old traditions of racial inequities, including prioritizing budget investments that close gaps in housing, education, workforce training, job creation and fair revenue policies.

I am proud that the Connecticut AFL-CIO has committed to becoming an anti-racist organization. In addition to serving as Executive Vice President of the Connecticut AFL-CIO, I chair our Racial and Economic Justice Committee. The Committee has done, and continues to do, the important work of recognizing and addressing unconscious bias and racism and the impact they have on workers. These issues affect our members, their workplaces and the communities in which they live and work. These can be tough conversations but are essential to moving forward with the clarity and intention required to end discrimination and inequality. We believe establishing Juneteenth Independence Day as a legal holiday will raise awareness about our history and open lines of communication and reflection to continue those difficult, but important discussions on matters of race and equity.

The Connecticut AFL-CIO already observes Juneteenth as a paid holiday for our staff. On behalf of the workers we represent, especially workers of color, we urge you to do the same in Connecticut by acting favorably on SB 350. Thank you.